

Farm Plan is Sow-Sow

By KEITH L. MARTIN

The preservation of O'Neil Farm is another small step closer to becoming a reality.

At their Thursday meeting, the four members of the Community Preservation Committee without personal ties to the project voted unanimously to recommend the use of \$1.5 million in Community Preservation Act funds to secure a conservation restriction on the 140-acre property. This act would essentially protect the property from development and is the only part of the \$4.3 million total price tag that the Wildlands Trust is asking from the town. The Trust plans to use private donations and grants to cover the rest of the cost to buy the land.

While the committee has given its blessing to use CPA funds, it will be up to town voters at a Special Town Meeting, most likely this spring, to give final approval to apply the money for the farm.

Since November, The Wildlands Trust has been laboring to preserve the last working farm on the South Shore and use former fire chief Carl O'Neil's land as an active dairy farm while creating walking trails and an educational experiences for students.

On February 4, the Trust's Executive Director, Mark Primack, was ready to present information on the project and hear a vote, but the CPC did not have a quorum of members not personally involved with the purchase. Chairwoman Holly Morris is on the Trust's board of directors, member Tony Kelso assisted the organization with

12 Duxbury Clipper

CPA Gives Thumbs Up to O'Neil Farm Project

historical background on the land and member Pat Loring is Duxbury's liaison to the Trust.

All three have stayed away from any discussion on the project to avoid a conflict of interest. That leaves members Jody Hall, George Wadsworth, Art Vautrain and Diane Bartlett as the only members without such a conflict. At the February 4 meeting, Vautrain was not present, so the other three decided to informally hear the presentation and vote at a later date.

On Thursday, all four who could vote were present at the meeting and once the other three excused themselves, lauded the merits of the preservation project.

"This is the kind of preservation effort that this town supported when it adopted the CPA," said Vautrain, who heard the presentation on his own time. "The combination of funds used for this...will help save an important part of Duxbury's heritage."

Bartlett added that an opportunity like this does not come often and would be "a wonderful heritage for our children."

Hall felt that since O'Neil himself was so passionate that his land remain a working farm, the committee should support these efforts and moved to recommend the use of CPA funds.

Hearing nothing but praise for the endeavor, Wadsworth - who assumed the chairman's role with Morris' departure - said the group should "put this to bed procedurally and vote."

The motion to recommend the use of \$1.5 million of CPA funds for the project passed 4-0.

In other business at Thursday's meeting, the community preservation committee:

- Discussed the three articles they will present at Town Meeting, including Article 33 that seeks to sell 10.5 acres of the Delano property off Old Cordwood Path to the water department for \$117,600. At their February 23 meeting, selectmen voted to not support the article, saying the move amounted to buying the land twice. CPC members, however, disagreed with this move and plan to present their case to voters at the Annual Town Meeting on March 13. Wadsworth indicated that the selectmen were acting as normal water commissioners would, but said that if the water department wanted to build a new well on the site, they should buy the land. Members of the committee decided to wait on the Town Meeting vote before seeing how not selling the land would impact things like a conservation restriction on the property.

- Announced they would hold a public hearing on the three articles on Thursday, March 4 at 7:30 p.m. in the Merry Room at the Duxbury Free Library. The hearing will provide an opportunity for citizens to weigh in on the articles and listen to the status of the committee's work.

March 3, 2004

- Discussed a possible opportunity to purchase over 10 acres of land on West Street, known as Jaycox/Christmas Tree Farms. The town has first right of refusal on the land under Mass. General Law, Chapter 61, on the forest land. While no official notification of a purchase was presented to the CPC, Chairwoman Holly Morris said she received a call from the owner indicating he had an offer for the land that would put two houses on the property for \$600,000. Morris and others on the committee felt this was a good price for the town to pay and are working on a walking tour of the land for a future recommendation to use CPA funds to preserve the land.

WILDLANDS TRUST